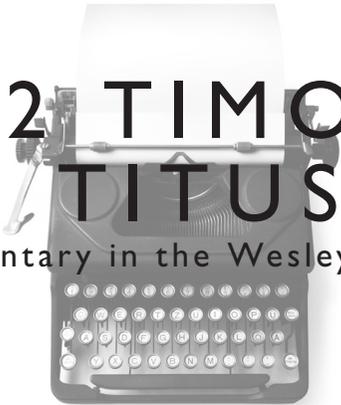


*New Beacon Bible Commentary



I & 2 TIMOTHY/
TITUS

A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition

David A. Ackerman



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I. EPISTOLARY PRESCRIPT AND SALUTATION: I TIMOTHY 1:1-2

1:1-2

BEHIND THE TEXT

Paul wrote letters because he could not personally be with the individuals or churches to which he wrote. His letters were written to address specific situations and concerns (Beker 1991, 20). Although he often planned to visit the churches at a later point, his letters express what he would have said if he could have been there in person. His letters were substitutes for his personal presence (Aune 1987, 158-82).

This letter begins with the typical greeting, identification of the sender, recipient, and a salutation. Paul included these elements in his letters but often expanded them, filling each with theological meaning. Some openings are relatively short (1 Thess 1:1), while others are more expansive (Rom 1:1-7; Titus 1:1-4). The salutation of 1 Timothy, like other letters (Rom 1:1-7; Gal 1:1-6; 1 Cor 1:1-3), offers clues about the problems in the churches and their solutions: Some in Ephesus had rejected Paul's authority and interpretation of the gospel. Listening to Timothy, Paul's legitimate spiritual son, offered the solution (Mounce 2000, 4).

The City of Ephesus

Ephesus was one of the major cities of the Roman Empire during the first century. Josephus (AD 37-95), a contemporary of Paul, called it the “metropolis of Asia” (*Ant.* 14.10.11). It was located on the east coast of what is now modern Turkey.

The history of Ephesus stretched back to at least before 1000 BC, when Ionian colonists founded it. Over the next millennia, the city was ruled by Lydians, Persians, Greeks, Seleucids, Ptolemies, and Pergamum. The Romans conquered Ephesus in 41 BC and made it the capital of the Roman province of Asia. By Paul’s time, its population was about 100,000, making it the third largest city after Rome and Alexandria.

Ephesus’s large harbor, near the mouth of the Cayster River, made it the trading hub of western Asia. Its location, on the major route between Rome and the East, aided in its commerce and strong economy. It also made Ephesus a melting pot of religions and philosophies. The constant traffic between Ephesus and Corinth may explain why Paul addressed similar issues in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and 1 Timothy. Ephesus had a mixed population of Greeks, Romans, Jews, and other ethnic groups.

At the center of the religious scene in Ephesus was the cult of Artemis (Roman Diana), the Greek goddess of women, fertility, childbirth, and hunting. The god Apollo was her twin. Artemis worship was widespread throughout Greece and Asia Minor. The Temple to Artemis in Ephesus, the Artemision, built in the sixth century BC, was destroyed around 350 BC and then rebuilt. The largest building in the Greek world at 220 by 425 feet (67 by 130 meters), it stood over 60 feet (18 meters) high and with 127 columns.

The Artemision was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It stood at the center of the city, visible from every direction. Artemis worship involved mystery rites and magic (see Acts 19:19). Silversmiths in Ephesus made and sold silver figurines of the goddess. They provoked a riot when Paul’s preaching led people to stop buying their idols. The mob cried out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” (Acts 19:28).

Other religions existed in Ephesus, including the Imperial cult, other mystery religions, and the worship of various Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. There was also a Jewish synagogue in Ephesus where Paul preached for three months (Acts 19:8).

IN THE TEXT

■ **I** Paul begins the letter in the typical style of the time, giving first his name as the author. This style was highly adaptable in the ancient world. Paul’s theological creativity can be seen in the opening. He consistently began his letters with the name **Paul**, the only name he ever used for himself in his letters. He first appears in Acts 7:58 under his Hebrew name, Saul. He probably had both names at birth and used them in different situations (McRay 2007, 25-28). He

began to go by Paul after Acts 13:9 when he appeared before Cyprus's Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7). He continued to use this name throughout his journeys and ministry among the Gentiles.

In a number of letters, Paul mentioned other co-senders (Sosthenes in 1 Corinthians; Timothy in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon; “all the brothers” in Galatians; Silas and Timothy in 1 and 2 Thessalonians). We cannot say how much these were involved in the writing process. Within these letters it is clear that Paul spoke as their primary authority. He is the only author of this letter.

Paul adds his office to his name with his favorite self-designation—**an apostle**. The Greek *apostolos* is used in two primary ways in the NT. The basic definition is one who has been sent out as an official representative or authorized agent of another (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). The term is used more specifically for those who had seen the risen Jesus and been commissioned specifically by him to preach the gospel. Jesus had many disciples, but among these, he designated twelve apostles as leaders (Luke 6:13). Paul counted himself part of this select group because of his encounter with Jesus in a vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5, 15; 22:14-15; 26:16-18; 1 Cor 15:8-9; Gal 1:15-16). In the Pastorals the term “apostle” connotes one with authority in the church. In 1 Tim 2:7, Paul restates his calling as an apostle specifically to the Gentiles.

In most of his letters (all except 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon), Paul calls himself **an apostle of Christ Jesus**. In Romans and Philippians he calls himself a “servant”; in Philemon, a “prisoner.” This designation is significant because it (1) indicates the source of Paul’s apostleship, (2) shows the authority behind his ministry, and (3) identifies his thought with that of Christ.

As with other letters, Paul establishes his ethos at the beginning in order to set a firm foundation for later exhortations. Ethos is the moral character or credibility of an author, the trust in the author the audience has or develops (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.2). Although this is a personal letter, it possesses a degree of an official mandate (→ 1 Tim 1:3) from an apostle to his young protégé. It authorizes Timothy to deal with the issues in Ephesus.

The prepositional phrase **of Christ Jesus** translates the Greek genitive case. Here Paul implies that “Christ Jesus” is the *source* of his apostleship. In v 2 Paul will add the descriptive “Lord” to Christ Jesus, suggesting also a master/slave relationship of ownership (see Rom 1:1).

The Pastorals respond to challenges to Paul’s authority and interpretation of the gospel (Mounce 2000, 5). Teachers of false doctrines, myths, and genealogies were infiltrating the church (1 Tim 1:3-4), pulling believers away from the truth of the gospel. The problems addressed in 1 Timothy were not

new (see Acts 19:8-9). As elsewhere, opponents questioned both Paul's authority and his message (Gal 1:6-9). By mentioning his apostleship and its source at the beginning of the letter, Paul's authority serves as a persuasive force in all that follows.

This letter lends credibility to Timothy's assignment in Ephesus. Authority assumes accountability. There is a direct chain of command, from Christ to Paul to Timothy and finally to the Ephesians. Paul wants both Timothy and the Ephesians to realize this.

Paul's apostleship came by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope. This intensifies his apostolic authority. The preposition *kata* has an instrumental force (by) with a causal nuance: That is, Paul was an apostle *because of* God's command.

Command (*epitagē*) is a strong word used for both divine and kingly decrees (Delling 1972b, 36-37). In 2 Tim 1:1, Paul uses "will of God" instead of "command of God" to express "the active outworking or expression of the divine will" (Towner 2006, 96). Paul conveys the force of God's call in 1 Cor 9:16: "I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

The command Paul received had two sources: (1) **God** and (2) **Christ Jesus**. Both are genitive nouns modifying the word **command**. Christ called Paul to be an apostle while he was traveling on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:12-19). This experience impacted the rest of his life (→ 1 Tim 1:12-17). When the truth of the gospel was threatened, he appealed to the divine origins of his call and message. In Titus 1:1, he likewise appeals to the command of God to deal with the heretical problems in Crete.

Paul next describes God as **Savior** (*sōtēros*; → 1 Tim 2:3; 4:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4). The OT frequently refers to God as the Savior of his people, especially in connection with the exodus from Egypt (Deut 32:15; 2 Sam 22:3, 47; 1 Chr 16:35; Pss 24:5; 25:5; 27:1, 9; 62:2, 6; 65:5; 79:9; 95:1; Prov 29:25; Isa 12:2; 17:10; 25:9; 62:11; Mic 7:7; Hab 3:18). This provided early Christians a solid foundation for their interpretation of Jesus as the one who brought the salvation offered by God (John 3:16; 1 Tim 1:15; 2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6). In the Pastorals, Paul refers to both God and Christ as Savior (2 Tim 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6). The Father is the architect and initiator of the plan of salvation implemented through the Son (Towner 2006, 97).

It is not accidental that this letter begins by reflecting on God as Savior. The relative concentration of the word *sōtēr* in the Pastorals (ten times) may suggest that Paul had to combat the claims of competing salvation cults of Ephesus and a misunderstanding of salvation by the false teachers (Knight 1992, 61-62). By the first century, the word "savior" was used for various heroes, deities, as well as Roman emperors who earned this title by delivering the people from wars and providing peace.

The other source of Paul's apostleship was **Christ Jesus our hope**. **Hope** (*elpis*) is a significant part of the Christian message because it anticipates the salvation promised by God. Christ is "the hope of glory" (Eph 1:12, 18; Col 1:27) and the only sure source of this salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom 5:2, 5; 8:24-25; 15:4, 13). John Wesley identified Christ as "the author, object, and ground, of all our hope" (1813, 220). Without Christ, there is no hope (Eph 2:12; 1 Thess 4:13). This hope will be fully experienced by those who believe (1 Tim 4:10) when Christ comes again (1 Cor 15:19-20, 57; Titus 2:13).

Jesus is the personal name; **Christ** is the title. The title consistently comes first in the Pastorals, except in 1 Tim 6:3 and 14, where the phrase is "Lord Jesus Christ." The Greek *Christos* is a translation of the Hebrew *māšīaḥ*, "anointed." Paul identifies Jesus as *the* Messiah, the promised anointed one of God. This became a vital part of his message, especially to the Jews (see Acts 9:20, 22; 17:2-3).

■ **2** This verse identifies the primary recipient of the letter. Although Paul addresses **Timothy**, the target audience includes the church in Ephesus. It will be Timothy's responsibility to pass along and implement Paul's directions.

Paul calls Timothy **my true son in the faith** to express their close bond and special relationship. The adjective **true** (*gnēsios*) designates a legitimate child born in wedlock. In a figurative sense, it can denote a genuine and sincere relationship (Büchsel 1964b, 727). In this verse, it shows the intimacy between Paul and Timothy. Paul boosts Timothy's authority by connecting Timothy to himself. The false teachers who were preoccupied with Jewish myths may have looked down upon things non-Jewish (→ 1 Tim 1:3). So Paul counters that by showing Timothy's legitimacy through this relationship.

Son (*teknon*) literally refers to a *child*. This should not be taken as an indicator of Timothy's age but as an emotive term of fictive kinship (Gal 4:19; Phlm 10; 1 John 2:1, 18; 3:7; 4:4; 5:21; compare 1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 1:2; 2:1; and Titus 1:4). The student-teacher relationship was often described as father-son in the ancient world (Mounce 2000, 8).

The prepositional phrase **in . . . faith** (*en pistei*) can be interpreted in two ways: Timothy became Paul's son by being faithful to the calling of God (instrumental) or because their common faith united them (locative). Faith for Paul is the proper response to God's grace (Rom 3:28; Eph 2:8-9). Timothy responded to grace and became Paul's Christian brother. Paul may have had some part in Timothy's conversion (1 Cor 4:15) during Paul's first missionary journey through Lystra, Timothy's hometown (Acts 13:49—14:25). Paul certainly became Timothy's adopted spiritual father and mentor (see Phil 2:22). Their relationship was bonded first and foremost by their common faith in Christ. This description of Timothy would give him additional authority to deal with the problems in Ephesus.

The greeting is given in the form of a prayer: **Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.** Paul begins all of his letters with similar greetings (see 2 Tim 1:2). He prays for three things for Timothy, each with theological significance.

The first, **grace** (*charis*), resembles the typical Greek greeting “rejoice” (*chairein*). **Grace** is one of the central topics of Paul’s letters and is mentioned thirteen times in the Pastorals. *Charis* grants favor or is something attractive. In the LXX, it translates the Hebrew *hên*, “show favor” (see Exod 33:13). Grace is the undeserved experience of God’s love in Christ that allows rebellious humanity to experience a right relationship with God. God shows grace by taking the first step in reconciliation—by sending his Son to die in our behalf (Rom 5:1-8). Grace confirms our hope in Christ and sustains us while we wait for his coming again. Grace continues its transformation, leading to holy living (2 Cor 9:8; Titus 2:11-12). Paul closes all of his letters with a benediction of grace (→ 1 Tim 6:21). These references form literary bookends, identifying grace as a succinct summary of his thought.

The second, **mercy** (*eleos*), is compassion to the needy. It is primarily a relational term experienced in covenant. It is the translation for the important Hebrew word *hesed* (**covenantal faithfulness, committed love**) in the LXX. God’s unconditional love is evident in his forgiveness and acceptance of sinners. Mercy is God’s response to the “dire plight of sinners and their need for divine favor” (Knight 1992, 66).

Grace and mercy are found together in Eph 2:4 and Titus 3:5 (see Heb 4:16). The verbal form, **receiving compassion**, in 1 Tim 1:13, 16, describes the salvation and forgiveness Paul received because of God’s grace in Christ. Paul includes grace and peace in all of his greetings, but he adds mercy only in 1 and 2 Timothy, possibly in reflection of salvation (1 Tim 1:14-16; 2 Tim 1:9-10). This greeting reveals Paul’s prayer-wish that Timothy might experience the salvation and hope provided by God in Christ (1 Tim 1:1).

The third, the result of grace and mercy, is **peace** (*eirēnē*). Paul uses the typical Hebrew greeting “peace” (*šālôm*) again with theological nuance. Peace is the result of justification and reconciliation with God (Rom 5:1). God is the source of peace (Rom 15:33; 16:20; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Thess 3:16). The world cannot give peace, only Jesus can (John 14:27). Peace with God unites believers (Rom 14:19; 2 Cor 13:11; Gal 5:22; Eph 2:14-18; 4:3; Col 3:15; 2 Tim 2:22) and brings peace with everyone (Rom 12:18). Peace is God’s blessing that brings joy to life as God intended. In Heb 12:14, the pursuit of peace is joined with holiness, implying that it is an inner experience that affects how we live outwardly. Peace was something Timothy was to pursue (2 Tim 2:22).

Knight sums up well the relationship of the three terms: “*charis*—God’s ongoing forgiveness and enabling, *eleos*—God’s sympathy and concern,

eirēnē—God’s tranquility and stability within and among them as individuals and as a Christian community” (1992, 67). These are experienced in new covenant relationship and cannot be counterfeited by the world.

Like Paul’s apostleship, there are two sources for these blessings, sharing the same preposition *from* (*apo*): **God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord**. This implies, first, that with God as **Father**, believers are part of God’s family. Through the Holy Spirit, they become God’s children, incorporated into God’s household (3:15). This enables them to address God as “Abba! Father!” (Rom 8:14-17; Gal 3:26—4:7; Matt 6:9; John 3:5-8).

Second, Jesus’ resurrection proved that he is **Lord** (Phil 2:10-11). *Kyrios* has a wide range of meanings in the Bible, from a polite “sir” to a reference to God. It represents someone with power and authority (Foerster 1965, 1041). Jesus was exalted to the supreme position as Lord because of his obedient suffering and death (Phil 2:10-11; Heb 2:6-10). Christians confess that “Jesus is Lord” (Rom 10:9-13). The Holy Spirit empowers us to call God “Father” and Jesus “Lord” (1 Cor 2:7-10; 12:3).

FROM THE TEXT

Christology. Paul was a monotheistic Jew but made room in his thinking for Jesus as Lord (1 Cor 8:4-6). Verse 1 could be translated as **God our Savior, even Christ Jesus our Hope**, taking the Greek word *kai* as “even” instead of “and” (Barrett 1963, 38). Father and Son are so united in Paul’s thought that they are one in their actions. Salvation comes from both (→ Titus 2:13). Both Father and Son called Paul to be an apostle and both provide grace, mercy, and peace. In six of Paul’s letters, both Father and Son are listed as the source of blessings (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2). There is no evidence that Paul had a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity, something later generations of Christians struggled to articulate. But it is clear that he considered Christ divine.

Hope. There is an innate drive within the human soul that spurs us onward into the unknown, to discover, analyze, and contemplate what is beyond ourselves. Hope addresses a deeper human need for purpose and belonging. Paul found his purpose in belonging to Christ as his “servant” (Rom 1:1). This relationship with Christ the “Master” can be experienced in this life (Col 1:27) through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5; 15:13). Fellowship now with Christ provides the hope for future salvation (Gal 5:5). Hope “points to the eschatological dimension of salvation” (Collins 2002, 22). Our present hope rests in the promise of the coming Jesus (Titus 2:13) when “we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). This hope inspires endurance through the challenges of life (Rom 5:4; 8:25-28).

Authority. Paul had a sense of mission that he passed on to Timothy. Timothy and his mission were part of a greater movement of God. This involved passing on Paul's commands (1 Tim 1:3, 18; 4:6, 11, 13; 5:1, 7; 6:17; 2 Tim 2:2; 4:2; Titus 2:15). Authority is often delegated by those *above* and must be received by those *below*. Timothy was to realize that "he who gives commands is himself under command" (Fee 1984, 35). In addition, the letter provides the necessary status for Timothy's leadership to be recognized within the church. Authority coupled with mission leads to effective leadership in troubled situations.